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# Bard

## **THE TOKEN**

It's the handwriting lets the wall  
stand. I am here for the sake of  
what I bring. What message  
do I bring? It is here, all round you,  
written in the grain of me,  
easier for you than me to read,  
read me, and someday tell me  
what my life is supposed to mean.  
Messengers are always the last to hear.

1 October 2003

## **SPEAK RANDOMNESS**

a child chafes her knee  
for what?

                    what strange  
hurry to be where?  
there is always,  
and always some member  
of the press corps near  
to tell us what we think we saw.

Things that happen to the skin  
are the deepest things,

steeple wounds, so obvious, a tower  
in a distant town  
you'd know from anywhere  
the hurt inside

that's you, nursing a scraped knee,  
not quite in tears,  
tears dry, skin  
recites its healing runes  
incessantly,

                    Immortal  
palimpsest! the old ones  
would exclaim,  
living monitor where even  
light leaves its darkening evidence.

1 October 2003

## **PRIMARIA**

with its simple flag  
its modest consulates

penguin in full flight  
ocean of air

1 X 03

## LOVECRAFT

Other languages, to link the morphemes of the imaginable unknown into the barely sayable. Did Lovecraft *hear* his eldritch incantations, or did he compose them by typography alone, what looks weird as a token of weird sound? The graphemes of weirdness, consonant combinations not found in English, in the safe Western Languages, they look scary, Etruscan, from the crepuscular phase of language, language before it was human. He used the eye sense to convey pictorially the weirdness and *nausea* of the words his characters overhear. He tries by over-writing to induce in the reader (more especially the readerly reader, the sage friend he yearned for all his life) the same sort of vertiginous unease, disorientation, nausea, horror that his characters are experiencing. Death by prose. It is effective, disturbing — not least because it is so easily ridiculed by those who don't experience the horror — just as fugitive accounts of meetings with extraterrestrials, angels, phantoms, ghosts are greeted with derision by those to whom unhappy voyants make their incoherent confession.

1 October 2003

## OK ORIGINAL DREAMING IT

1.

I know that luster  
quiet pilgrim to whom the church comes walking

I know that skin those  
blue jay eyes were my serenity

(the Russian horse asked Why  
the cowboy always answers My)

document broken on the table  
a river spills out and drowning men

the child makes out the words along the edge  
simultaneously feels the mass of its own flesh

thighs and buttocks enduring gravity  
the child learns the body of study

house of prayer the god of attention  
bid-house for wake-folk

my fork fell off the table daddy  
give me one more word

2.

because I live by etymologies  
narrow spokesman of the widest ocean

a woman waits (for me?)  
at the capstone of the Roman arch

because I chose to sprawl on the steps of the arena  
loaf in the sun I hid

the schoolgirls on their intimate field-trip  
thought I was a slate-grey lizard

motionless with fear but their teacher  
took me for the shadow of a swallow

poised high overhead in that unnerving way of theirs  
but why couldn't it just have been not me

just the lizard the schoolgirls in their blue skirts the shadow?

3.  
the body sticks to the chair  
the way the words stuck to the paper

we imitate what we have read  
until our life weaves its new text

from all those scraps of overcharged attention  
when the words we were reading suddenly meant

4.

the body sticks to the chair  
the way the eye lingers on the word

till it falls through the letters  
into the tumult of its history

the cavemouth behind every word  
dragon gorge and serpent cavern

the frightened eye moves away  
lands on the next word and tries to weave it

to the last, to interweave two terrors  
and so learns to read instead of seeing

5.

what if we never read the words  
what if we just went in?

Notes:

1.

I, we, it, they, she — forgive these animals who hurry through the park, the pades, and set the trees in motion with the greedy wind of their attention, I, we, they, me, we howl our habits, our golden eyes lurk in the woods we think we see.

2.

Each word in a text a separate and plenary experience — on when it's turned away from the 'reader' or been exhausted does the reader recoil — full of the experience of that descent upwards to the hidden Chariot, whose flight darkens the story of every word. Then the reader stumbles back outward, onward, to find the next word — a consolation, a debriefing, a theorem, a kind of God standing in the gravel of the way, to show the way.

2 October 2003



## SOLOMON

But do I do what the deal is  
or do I slip beneath  
the Seven of Hearts the next  
card in the deck as ever  
eight years between oases  
and each *in time* turns into desert?

Solomon is my appeal  
against the arrogant jurisconsults  
who rule time, who measure kerosene  
into American jet liners  
who fly to imperial chancelleries  
masked in ancient Eurocities,

have what you want but have  
wisdom with it, mulberry and pear,  
who cares, door open on a melon,  
deep white musk of alternate  
theologies you name it he was there  
a king in a kilt a knave  
in his hearts he had to get out  
the nice thing about deserts is emptiness

3.

one day he stared in the well's eye  
down there where you see the sky  
better than over

and he asked

But where does all my power come from  
church or barn, is it me or is it mine,  
does it run through me like batteries,  
does it walk somewhere else when I sleep,

there must be another wisdom  
that knows what wisdom is

and that's the one I haven't mastered yet  
along with all my wives and wills  
doves in the courtyard dithering in dust  
seem to know as much as I do  
so I am humble in my majesty

since I am a thing in a paradise of things.

3 October 2003

## THE CONUNDRUM

And then in darkness Homer fumbled with a line:

Does it sound like poetry, or does it just sound like me?

3 X 03

**ALL THE PICTURES ON THE ANARCHIST WALL CALENDAR ARE OF THE DEAD**

If however all the famous  
people are dead we all  
can be famous later we suppose

so death is one more weapon  
in the arsenal of feeling good  
“one day they’ll remember me

who now don’t give me the time of day”  
and then he sneezed three times, as if  
angels were watching and could provide

audio-visual animals to track him down  
assertion by assertion  
into the undergrowth he said where language

lurks, but he’s wrong,  
there’s just squirrels and ivy and opossums.  
I know. I used to live here too.

4 October 2003

## THE PHEROMONE SANDWICH

and crossing the street  
to get in our out of the sun  
lean on the barber pole  
till he comes out to chase you

there is no reason for a smelly old bus  
the rest of the world is right here  
all the time,

Fresno just around the corner  
in case you wanted something  
or go and speak Armenian in your sleep

Great teachers come down from the mountains in rain  
water streaming down their faces, eyelashes  
loosing rain drops, smile or gravity,

they keep coming towards us all our lives  
teacher after teacher till we tell

because I love thee I have found a way.

4 October 2003

**SHE THOUGHT:**

Making love with him would be like making  
love to a ruined cathedral. Or a swamp.  
Or a glacier creeping on you in the night.  
Or a fallen statue. Or a bird  
in the middle of the sky, a hawk  
maybe with a strange high cry.

4 October 2003

## RED SOX

Watching a Red Sox game  
is like talking to a hard of hearing  
psychoanalyst, all your  
repressions and anxieties  
come into play, your guilty  
knowledge of causality,  
you did it if they lose,  
and they lose, the bat and ball  
have nothing to do with it,  
it's inside you the game  
is running, you hardly need  
to watch, you know so well  
the fate you're fleeing,  
the nice men in white clothes  
are all phases of your odd  
strengths, your unaccountable  
failures as grounder  
after grounder dribbles past you  
and blue October finds you weeping.  
Because it is always  
October where you are,  
you go home hoarse with explanations.

*Or,*

Watching a Red Sox game  
is like watching a Passion Play  
they've put on for a hundred years  
in some quaint village. You know

how it's going to end. You know,  
but keep hoping along the way,  
the beauty of what could be  
distracts you from what will.

5 October 2003



## SAVING TIME

as if I could preserve it  
confiture de temps, like Proust,  
an amber jelly with green glints in it  
and store it in beaded glass  
jars way back in my cupboard  
to take it out at midnight  
when I'm full of doubt  
and nibble a tongue tip's worth  
of morning after all, new  
wind, the sea not far.

5 October 2003

## **CHRISTAFARIANS**

a northern island full of them  
what are they I didn't know  
in my sleep they seemed like Christian men  
no women among them

buy why the -farian part, no cannabis  
in sight no Emperor no Africa no song

bleak boats in cold surf  
sails furled or no sails,

no words or nothing said.

5 October 2003

## MILANDERWORT

is a straight-stemmed  
milkweed more erect  
than others — you tell it  
by the feeling when you pass  
as if for once it's you  
who are crooked and it  
alone is on the level.

You feel that often  
in the woods  
haunted by old habits.  
Every moment  
you expect a ruined chapel.  
Paltryweed, seminox  
and blue camenias  
under tall larches,  
a shadow moves, a  
shadow has breasts

for such dark milk  
you travel all your days.

6 October 2003

## **FROM THE CUFF**

and what protrudes  
we tell time, we read the arm  
from wrist the character  
is told, the pulse  
reveals your mother's health

veins understand the man  
salt is not good for the soul

6 October 2003

## ARROGANT

A message from the moon  
you had no right to tell me

I was happy in moon-deafness  
I didn't know what the light had in mind

I was so busy praying I didn't listen

sometimes the tiger is so busy hunting  
she forgets to eat

what we speak is mostly what we hear  
plus something else. What is that?

that is the widow's portion the bent  
coin we bring to language

that pays all our final debts.

6 October 2003